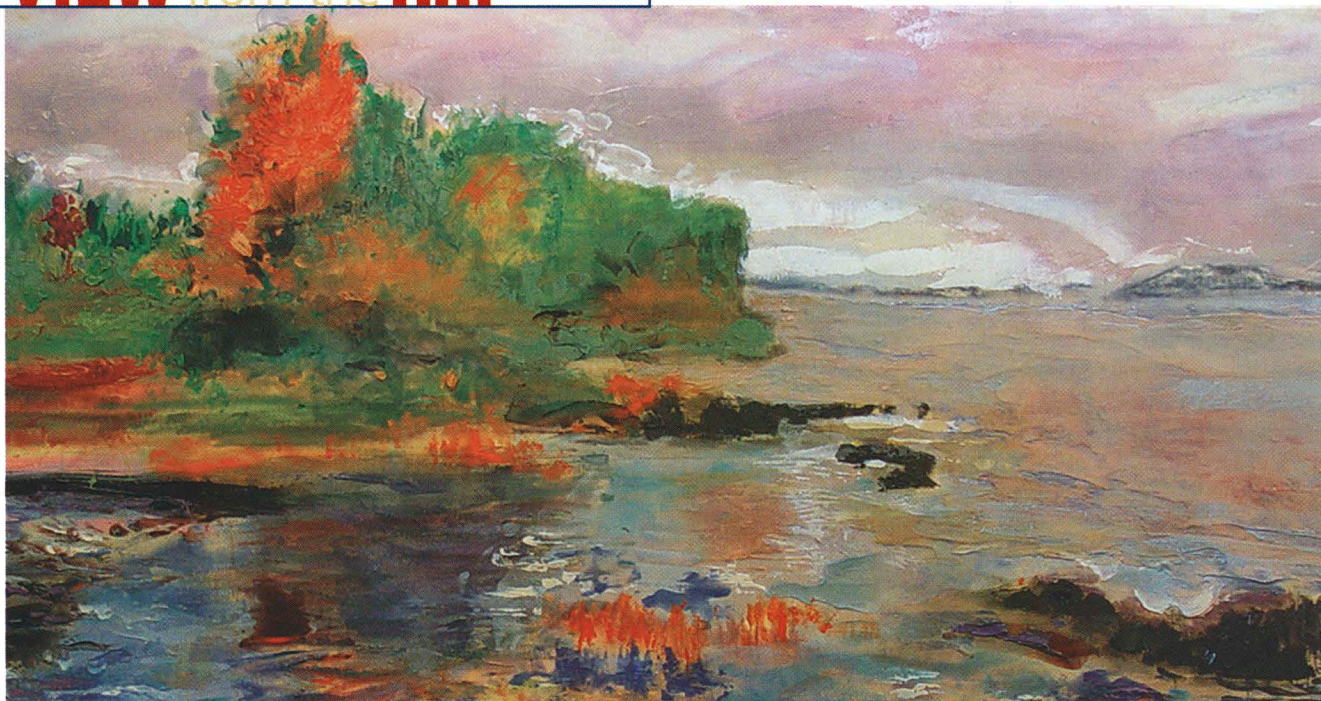


VIEW from the Hill



High Tide, 2002, 65 x 91 inches, acrylic on canvas, by Darryl Hughto

Greenberg's Syracuse Connection

Clement Greenberg '30 (1909-94) stirred the world of art like no other critic in the 20th century with his influential—and often controversial—writings on modern art. “The work he did as a critic, as part of critical literature and the literature of aesthetics, is certainly the most important body of writing of the 20th century in its field, in terms of its lasting power,” says David Tatham, professor emeritus of art history. “He is still quoted all the time.”

Greenberg challenged artists to aspire to high aesthetic standards, maintaining that “great art” should stand the test of time. And it was in the company of artists in their studios, looking at their work and offering insights, where he made impressions that endure as part of his legacy today. This holds true for a group of Central New York artists who knew Greenberg as a trusted and cherished mentor and friend whose honesty, encouragement, guidance, and discerning eye inspired them to dedicate themselves to their art. “He was hungry to look at art,” says Syracuse artist Scott Bennett '74. “He was generous and direct, and he had a great sense for finding and pointing out the strengths in an artist's work.”

Greenberg's Syracuse connection was celebrated this summer with *Greenberg in Syracuse: Then & Now*, a two-part exhibition featuring works by Bennett, Stephen Achimore '75, Darryl Hughto, Mark Raush '74, G'90, and Susan Roth. “Clem felt it was useful to go to artists' studios and see what younger artists were developing,” says Hughto, a former SU professor who first met Greenberg in 1968 and introduced him to local artists and art students. “It was a give and take with the artists that kept him aware, vital, and interested.”

The show, sponsored by SU, the Gifford Foundation, and numerous patrons, was hosted by thINC (The Institution

of a Now Culture) at its Company Gallery downtown. The exhibition catalog features a documentary DVD on Greenberg and the participating artists by J.R. Hughto, and essays by Tatham; Karen Wilkin, an art critic who was the show's curator; and Suzanne Shane '76, G'81, project manager and a DIPA administrator. “The idea was to show paintings from early in these artists' careers when they first knew Greenberg, and then show a completely different set of their paintings to demonstrate how they have progressed,” Shane says. “Greenberg had a fond spot for Syracuse.”

Likewise, the artists shared a deep appreciation for Greenberg. “He was humble before great art and before new art,” says Roth, who studied at SU and was also a visiting artist. “His greatest gift to me was when he said, ‘Focus on your inner life and the things that matter.’” Greenberg's focus in the studio energized their work. He expected them to show him all their recent creations, piece by piece, and hold nothing back, no matter how reluctant they were to share it. “He trusted his first take,” Bennett says. “There were always surprises.” Darryl Hughto compares Greenberg to a compass. “He kept me oriented, striving to maintain a level in my work,” he says. “It was always painting to painting with him, moment to moment, time to time.”

Greenberg, no doubt, would have been pleased by the exhibition (which is scheduled to be shown at Lubin House's Palitz Gallery in New York City in 2006). As Hughto and Roth point out, the opening was like a homecoming for the artists, an opportunity to showcase their work before local supporters and pay tribute to a man who meant so much to all of them. “He was exceptional,” Hughto says. “One of a kind.”

—Jay Cox